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Dr. S. E. Luria
Department of Biology
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge 39, Massachusetts

Dear Lu:

Paul Berg told me after his return from his trip to Boston that you would like to have more information on what Westex has been doing. I'm sorry if there has been any hiatus in communication; I had supposed that through your membership on Rossi's committee and by your contacts with him that you would see the material that is routed through the Space Science Board. I am waiting for George Derbyshire at the Space Science Board Secretariat to compile some more copies of a summary report and will ask him to send you one as soon as they are ready. Meanwhile, you might like to ask Rossi for the "Summary of Westex Material" that was distributed as part of the agenda for the last Board meeting.

The one additional item is a news story in Pravda which identifies Ierusalimskii as one of the Russian Microbiologists who was instrumental in securing the sterilization of Lunik II. We have still received no information on any details of their procedures nor in fact on any aspect of Russian exobiology.

As to developments here instructions have evidently been issued to sterilize all American space flights although as far as I know, no official public announcement has been made of this. After interminable delay and pressure from many sources, NASA finally agreed to subcontract this problem to Charlie Phillips' lab at Fort Detrick and I am confident that it is now in the best possible hands. Charlie writes me, as one encouragement, that at least the interior of the vacuum tubes that he has tested so far appears to be sterile.

After some soul-searching Westex finally concluded that the optimum experiment would be a television microscope with as much cytochemical accessories as possible. This could be used, for example, in conjunction with automatic culture devices for the most definitive signal of microbial multiplication. I have finally decided to put my own hand into the game and in collaboration with some people in Biophysics to try to develop some prototype instruments. It did not seem likely that NASA would be in a position to support fundamental work in this direction during the next fiscal year or two but I think I can get some interim support elsewhere to get us ready for a full scale development project in a year or so.

Another bit of encouraging news is that NASA is setting up, at long last, a program in planetary science as an extension of the lunar working group.

I am still quite anxious to keep as many meetings as possible in California. But I am also beginning to feel that there should be a more nationally representative backing in exobiological advice to the SSB. Do you think you might be agreeable to travelling out here for any future sessions? Perhaps if there is another phage meeting early next year we might take advantage of the opportunity.

The Russians are beginning to make some noises in favor of international cooperation in space experiments. This may have the disadvantage of putting us under great pressure of time to have an experiment ready to put on a cooperative vehicle. I am expecting to attend the International Cospar Symposium at Nice in January and may have some opportunity for contact with the Russians at that time.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg